

**FHWA/NCDOT Joint Work Plan for
Timely Program Delivery with Environmental Excellence**
Sponsors: John Sullivan (FHWA), Len Sanderson (NCDOT), and Roger Sheats (NCDOT)

3/24/04

Goal	Issues	Coordinators	Comments
1. Develop and implement an action plan that demonstrates NCDOT, FHWA and resource agency commitment to deliver NC's transportation program in a timely manner with environmental excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can NCDOT, resource agencies, and other federal organizations work together to effectively and efficiently deliver North Carolina's transportation program with environmental excellence? • Are NCDOT's priorities communicated and clearly understood within the department and by resource agencies? • Are the resource agencies' priorities communicated and clearly understood within the resource community and by NCDOT? • How can NCDOT and the agencies best define and communicate the workload demanded by the transportation program and then commit resources accordingly? 	<p>John Sullivan – FHWA Len Sanderson – DOT Roger Sheats – DOT</p> <p>Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse & Julie Hunkins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need commitment from DOT, FHWA, COE, EPA, USFWS, DENR, and DCR, as a minimum. Others to consider including are NMFS and WRC. • Consider developing a strategy with NCDOT, FHWA, COE and DENR, as these agencies already have partnerships in place and common mission. • A commitment at the top does not translate directly to commitment at the staff level. Changing the culture within the participating organizations will take leadership, communication, accountability, and perseverance. • Consider using a consultant to guide discussions with senior leadership, formalize commitment and develop implementation plans to ensure that the commitment leads to changes in behaviors and actions.
2. Reduce the time required to reach each concurrence point within the Merger 01 process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long does it take to complete the project development process? • How long does it take to reach different stages in the Merger 01 process? • How effective and efficient is the Merger 01 process? • How effective are the Merger 01 concurrence meetings? How can we improve them? 	<p>Rob Ayers – FHWA Debbie Barbour – DOT Greg Thorpe – DOT</p> <p>Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merger 01 Implementation Team has laid foundation but little data exists on the real time taken to go through the concurrence steps • Consider data being collected by EPA and PDEA on Merger 01 tracking
3. Define and develop a baseline assessment of the project delivery process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the baseline measurement for the project development process? • How should we measure the project delivery process? Currently, we measure dollars expended and number of projects advanced. What other measures should we adopt? 	<p>Marcus Wilner – FHWA Julie Hunkins – DOT</p> <p>Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background data: Project Delivery Team information; Bridge Replacement information; and "Delayed Road Construction" Report to Legislative Committee • Consider role of PMII • Consider use of a consultant to help develop performance measures and establish baseline • Should incorporate and be compatible with DOH business plan

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4. Decrease the time it takes in the process for ensuring compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act and the NC Endangered Species Act for threatened and/or endangered mussel species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much time is invested in following the federal and state Endangered Species Act procedures? How do these procedures impact project schedules? How many projects involve protected mussel species? Are there particular types of projects that are more likely to have endangered species involvement? What are the standards required for an individual to receive a federal permit for threatened and endangered mussel species? Do we have enough people with federal mussel permits to sufficiently meet all workload demands from within NCDOT (e.g. TIP projects, NC Moving Ahead Projects, Bridge Maintenance, etc.)? How does the competition for mussel species expertise affect NCDOT's various programs (TIP projects, NC Moving Ahead, Bridge Maintenance, etc.)? 	Rob Ayers – FHWA Bill Rosser – DOT Phil Harris – DOT Don Lee – DOT Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FHWA currently consolidating data and interviewing stakeholders on the process and its current problems. Also researching activities pursued by other states. Could look at multi-pronged approach by: (1) developing clear expectations to obtain federal permit; (2) develop screening training on mussels (particularly for Division Offices); and (3) develop programmatic agreements for specific mussels in certain areas
5. Develop a methodology to determine the type of document for each project based on anticipated impacts and to improve the quality of environmental documents by ensuring that relevant data is presented in documents while other data, including background information for applicable laws and regulations, is referenced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does North Carolina do more higher-level environmental documentation (i.e. EIS's) than other states? How is the type of document (EA or EIS) and associated schedule required for each project determined? Has NCDOT clearly defined and communicated to consultants our expectations for NEPA and technical documents quality and delivery schedules? How does document quality affect review times and the allocation of personnel by NCDOT, FHWA and resource agencies? How does NCDOT ensure that the contents of project documentation are consistently high quality and contain relevant data presented in a user-friendly format? How do we determine which issues need to be studied and discussed in documents? 	Clarence Coleman – FHWA Rob Hanson – DOT Chris Militsher – EPA Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FHWA, EPA, & PDEA started an EA standardization effort FHWA proposes to survey other states on document streamlining and standardization ACEC-NCDOT has expressed an interest in improving the quality of planning documents and a decrease in the review time. Resource agencies are also interested. Gail Grimes has also done some work to streamline certain sections of documents Need to define and set expectations for high quality documents (tech reports and NEPA docs)
6. Identify opportunities to educate the NCDOT and resource agencies on the role of safety in the transportation decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we ensure a balanced consideration of both safety and environmental factors in transportation projects? Do project schedules and decisions adequately consider the importance of safety issues? 	Emily Lawton – FHWA Debbie Barbour – DOT Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FHWA proposes to (1) present safety topics at Interagency Coordination meetings and (2) help ensure accuracy and adequacy of safety information in NEPA documents PennDOT Presentation on crash data
7. Prevent conformity lapses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conformity lapses have a negative effect on the transportation program. To what extent will the transportation program be affected in areas that are not in conformance? What measures are and should we be taking to prevent conformity lapses? Air quality standards are changing; new areas in our state have been designated as non-attainment. What are the potential impacts of these new designations? 	Eddie Dancausse – FHWA Mike Bruff – DOT Sponsor Liaison: Donna Dancausse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans in place to work with new non-attainment areas, including education and assistance to address air quality requirements

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8. Integrate systems planning and project development processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well are our systems planning and project development processes, products, roles and responsibilities defined and documented? • How are long range planning products and services used during project development? How can these products and services be configured to best meet the needs of the project development and Merger processes? • How can we better educate Merger 01 participants on system planning processes? • How can we better educate systems planning personnel on Merger 01? • How are human and natural environmental issues considered in the planning process? 	<p>Marcus Wilner – FHWA Mike Bruff – DOT Greg Thorpe – DOT</p> <p>Sponsor Liaison: Julie Hunkins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant from FHWA (\$300,000) • Includes developing and maintaining a comprehensive guidance manual for Systems Planning and Project Development • Project Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-documented, integrated planning process - Electronically accessible procedures manual - Systems level purpose & need framework - Recommendation for automation - Process to identify fatally flawed alternatives - Performance goals
9. Improve efficiency of compliance with Section 106 process in collaboration with DCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure that the 106 process operates effectively and efficiently? • How can we ensure that the data supporting decision-making for the 106 process is of high-quality and is easily accessible to appropriate stakeholders? • Do all stakeholders have an equal understanding of the current Section 106 process and associated regulations and timeframes? • Is the process well-documented, properly staffed, and consistently executed? • Are stakeholders' expectations for schedule and process-time requirements well-defined, understood, and accepted? 	<p>Marcus Wilner – FHWA Carl Goode – DOT</p> <p>Sponsor Liaison: Julie Hunkins</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU is complete. • Scoping is complete. • OEQ is taking lead in facilitating workshop with the goal to improve and streamline various aspects of Section 106 coordination and compliance activities.